



The

Phyllis Schlafly Report



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Why the Public Schools Are Being Federalized

Congress is about to pass legislation that will federalize every local school district and spell the end of local and state control of America's public school classrooms. Mindful of Ronald Reagan's words, "You can't control the economy without controlling the people," Bill and Hillary Clinton have found the way to control the economy by controlling America's schoolchildren.

The plan started with the passage of Bill Clinton's two 1994 laws, the Goals 2000 Act and the School-to-Work Act, and we were moved further in the same direction with his Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Now, with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), H.R.2/S.2, the Clintons are about to complete the nationalization of the public school classroom.

This massive education bill is the eighth successive five-year plan to increase academic achievement by providing "compensatory education" grants to schools with high concentrations of low-income children. It is more ambitious and comprehensive than the Clintons' discredited 1994 health care plan.

A holdover from Lyndon Johnson's Great Society legislation, the ESEA has already spent more than \$116 billion. According to the Federal Government's five-year \$29 million longitudinal study concluded in 1997, the ESEA failed to achieve its objectives.

Unable to make the argument that ESEA, with its current price tag in excess of \$10 billion per year, will raise academic achievement of poor children, the Clintons designed this "stealth" legislation with very different objectives. Pretending to "educate to high standards," ESEA mandates that all 50 states agree to implement a one-size-fits-all education plan. (Sec. 1001(a)(1))

How? The bill calls for mandated "statewide minimum competencies for all children." That's code language for the disastrous and discredited Outcome Based Education (OBE). (Sec. 1111(B)(4)(A,B))

OBE (also called performance-based education) is measured by "criterion referenced tests" that assess students against a low threshold of achievement (formerly associated with the letter grade "D"), rather than by "norm referenced tests" which measure how well

students master a body of knowledge in comparison with other students (such as the ACT, SAT, GRE, Iowa Basic, and Stanford Achievement tests).

ESEA's purpose is to tie schools to the floor of minimum achievement rather than to the ceiling of educational excellence and possibilities. The oft-repeated phrase "all children will learn" really means that all children will be taught only the low level of learning that is actually reached by all children.

The term "minimum competencies" doesn't sell well to parents and the taxpaying public, so a linguistic bait-and-switch occurs throughout the bill. "Standards" means minimum levels, "accountability" means accountability to the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor, "integrated curriculum" means integrating job training into the school day, and "local control" means control only over implementing the nonacademic job-training system but not over standards, content or testing.

Not only does ESEA force OBE and criterion-referenced testing on every local school district in the nation, ESEA cements into place the goals of nationalized curriculum, nationalized testing and national teacher certification, which were envisioned in the 1994 Goals 2000 Act. ESEA also continues the radical changes required by the 1994 School-to-Work Act to guide schools away from a knowledge-based system and toward training for jobs selected by local workforce boards. (Sec. 1111, State Plans)

School-to-Work is the Clintons' vision for controlling the economy. Students will be pigeon-holed into jobs to serve the best interests of the local economy as decided by the bureaucrats, not into careers chosen by the student.

"But," Congress proclaims, "the Goals 2000 and School-to-Work laws are sunseting!" Nothing could be further from the truth.

While those laws are about to expire, all 50 states adopted them and ESEA requires that states certify they have adopted "challenging content standards and challenging student performance standards . . . with aligned assessments." That is bureaucratic jargon for continuing the 1994 Goals 2000/School-to-Work mandates. (Sec. 1111)

ESEA has already moved far in the legislative process because Congress was hoodwinked by the bill's doublespeak language and only now is beginning to understand that the Goals 2000 and School-to-Work laws have morphed into ESEA. If ESEA passes in its current form, every public school district will be forced to continue implementation of the revolutionary restructuring required by the 1994 laws.

ESEA is not stand-alone legislation but works in tandem with other federal, state and local programs to mesh curriculum, graduation requirements and public funds into state-filed, federally-approved Unified Plans

under the Workforce Investment Act. Under the guise of education "reform," all traditional public school curriculum, testing and teaching methods are being replaced with a job training system modeled after failed socialized economies in Europe.

ESEA will fulfill Bill and Hillary Clinton's dream of national economic planning fed by a federalized workforce training system domiciled in the public schools. ESEA is the capstone of their plan to restructure our American system away from free enterprise, academic achievement in schools, and the freedom of individuals to select their future occupations.

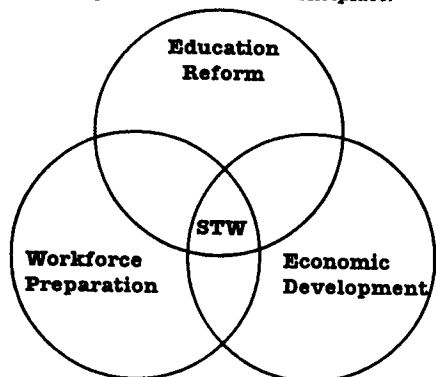
Clinton's Plan for Education & the Economy

The following graphic, distributed by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning (DCFL), explains how School-to-Work is a government plan to interlock public school "reform" of curriculum with workforce preparation (job training) and economic development (national economic planning). This official state publication states that the School-to-Work mission is "to create a seamless system of education and workforce preparation for all learners, tied to the needs of a competitive economic marketplace."

School-to-Work means that the mission of the public schools is no longer to educate children to be all they can be, but instead to train students to take entry-level jobs as needed by the global economy. The different motivations of several special interests perfectly mesh in School-to-Work: the Clinton Administration economic gurus (Marc Tucker, Ira Magaziner and Robert Reich) who say they want America to imitate the German school-workforce system, the Clinton Administration education activists (particularly the teachers unions and Education Department bureaucrats) who want to control the school system, and the multinational corporations that seek a poorly-educated but well-trained labor force willing to work for low wages to compete with low-paid workers in the Third World.

School-to-Work Initiative Mission:

"To create a seamless system of education and workforce Preparation for all learners, tied to the needs of a competitive economic marketplace."



Source: "Making Connections"
- Minnesota Department of Children,
Families and Learning

The master plan to federalize education and tie it into the workforce originated with the now infamous "Dear Hillary" letter written on November 11, 1992 by Marc Tucker, president of the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE). It lays out a plan **"to remold the entire American system" into "a seamless web that literally extends from cradle to grave and is the same system for everyone,"** coordinated by **"labor market boards at the local, state and federal levels" where curriculum and "job matching" will be handled by counselors "accessing the integrated computer-based program."**

On this page is reproduced the letterhead of Marc Tucker's organization. Noteworthy members of his Board of Trustees are Hillary Rodham Clinton, Ira Magaziner (chief author of the Clintons' massive 1994 health care plan), and David Rockefeller Jr.

Rep. Bob Schaffer (R-CO) correctly analyzed this letter as "a blueprint for a German model of education that would be forced upon the people of America." He said this "moves the country toward a government-managed, government-owned centralized education system from kindergarten past college." He placed this letter in the *Congressional Record* on September 25, 1998. It is most easily accessible on Eagle Forum's website: <http://www.eagleforum.org>

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Math 'Standards' Give Standards a Bad Name

The U.S. Department of Education last October officially endorsed ten new math courses for grades K-12, calling them "exemplary" or "promising" and urging local school districts to "seriously consider" adopting one of them. The recommended programs were approved by an "expert" panel commissioned by the Department of Education.

But many parents believe that the "experts" are subtracting rather than adding to the skills of schoolchildren. Parents are starting to realize that "fuzzy" math courses (variously called "whole math," "new math" or "new new math") are producing kids who can't do arithmetic, much less algebra.

Scholars are criticizing the new courses, too. They say that most of the panel's "field reviewers" who made the initial recommendations were teachers, not math experts, and that the panel making the final decisions did not include "active research mathematicians."

Within six weeks of the Department of Education's announcement, more than 200 mathematicians and scholars banded together to denounce the government-anointed curricula because they fail to teach basic skills. The group wrote a joint letter to Education Secretary Richard Riley criticizing the "exemplary" programs and asking the Department to reconsider its choices.

The group then published the letter as a full-page ad in the November 18th *Washington Post*. Despite the prestige of the letter's signers, including four Nobel Laureates and two winners of the Fields Medal (the highest mathematics honor), Riley refused to back away from the Department's endorsements.

Riley defended his Department's recommendations because they conform to the so-called "standards" adopted in 1989 by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). But the nationally created math "standards" are just as off the mark as the nationally created history standards that caused such an uproar when they were released in 1995. The history standards were denounced in the U.S. Senate by a vote of 99 to 1, but that didn't faze the educators determined to indoctrinate students with "politically correct" history. After a few cosmetic changes, revisionist history masquerading under the label "standards" has infected nearly all new social studies textbooks.

The schools appear just as determined to force fuzzy math on children despite its obvious failures and the opposition of scholars and parents. In Illinois, parents have clashed with schools over one of these "exemplary" courses called "Everyday Math," or "Chicago Math" because it was produced by the University of Chicago Mathematics Project, complaining that the curriculum neglects basic computation.

Last August, parents in Plano, Texas filed a lawsuit against their school district over another of these Department-approved courses, "Connected Math," accusing the district of failing to give their children basic

math instruction. In December, parents in Montgomery County, Maryland kicked up vigorous opposition to Connected Math even though the district was being enticed into using it by the prospect of a \$6 million federal grant.

Another of these Department-approved courses, "Mathland," directs the children to meet in small groups and invent their own ways to add, subtract, multiply and divide. It's too bad they don't know that adults wiser than those now in school have already discovered how to add, subtract, multiply and divide.

Critics charge that these fuzzy math programs, which are touted as complying with "standards," do not teach traditional or standard arithmetic at all and actually give the word "standards" a bad name. They are based on such theories as that "process skills" are more important than computational skills and that correct solutions are not important so long as the student feels good about what he is doing.

The arguments for fuzzy math are that it is supposed to spare children the rigors of teacher-imposed rules and teach them that all they need is a calculator. Fuzzy math omits drill in basic math facts, fails to systematically build from one math concept to another, and encourages children to work in groups to "discover" math and construct their own math language.

According to mathematician Joel Hass of the University of California at Davis, one of the signers of the letter to Riley, "Saying that we don't need to teach children how to compute now that we have calculators is like saying we don't need to teach them how to draw now that we have cameras or we don't need to teach them how to play music now that we have CD players." Mathematician William G. Quirk, whose career includes teaching 26 different math and computer science courses at three universities, says, "Nowhere in the NCTM's 258 pages of standards do they suggest that kids should remember any specific math facts."

Critics complain that failing to teach children the division of fractions precludes their moving on to algebra. David Klein of California State University, another signer of the letter to Riley, said, "In shutting the door to algebra, Connected Math also closes doors to careers in engineering and science."

In 1989 23% of freshmen entering California colleges needed remedial help in math. This figure has now risen to 55%. If parents want their children to learn arithmetic, they will have to teach them at home.

Note: For further information, see Education Reporter, April 1999 on the Workforce Investment Act of 1998; November 1999 on Goals 2000's New Life; February 2000 on Title I Not Making the Grade, and on Alabama's Reading Initiative.

Money Isn't the Solution to Illiteracy

The presidential candidates have just discovered what many of us have known for years — that education is the number-one issue. They have even discovered that illiteracy is a problem! But their only solution is more taxpayer spending, more “tests,” and more federal control disguised as “accountability” (to the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor, *not* to parents or even local school boards).

Private industry has discovered this problem, too. Former Netscape president James L. Barksdale announced a \$100 million gift to promote the teaching of reading in Mississippi because, he said, “we have 300,000 to 400,000 jobs we can’t fill in the industry,” primarily because young people don’t know how to read. It’s hard to see how there could be a more stunning indictment of the public schools because, after all, the schools are just baby-sitters if they don’t perform the elementary task of teaching children how to read.

If money could end illiteracy, there would be no problem because the schools have had plenty of money. It takes very little money, anyway. All it takes is a good phonics system. In addition to the billions of state and local taxpayer dollars that annually finance the first grade in tens of thousands of public schools, \$118 billion of federal tax dollars have been spent through Title I program of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act over the last 35 years. It’s a colossal failure. More than a third of public school students are now in remedial education classes while achievement continues to decline.

The premise that poverty causes illiteracy is fundamentally wrong. In the 18th and 19th centuries when Americans were pitifully poor by today’s standards, we had almost complete literacy. Today up to 50% of Americans are illiterate or only semi-literate. Just compare today’s politicians’ writings with those of the 18th century (e.g., *The Federalist Papers*).

Illiteracy is the result of the failure to use phonics to teach children how to read, *i.e.*, teach them the sounds and syllables of the English language so they can put them together like building blocks and read words. Instead, for decades the school establishment has insisted on using a fraudulent method first called “whole word” and later “Whole Language,” by which children are taught to guess at words by looking at pictures, skip over words they don’t know, substitute words that seem to fit, and predict words based on the context of the story. This results in school-induced illiteracy.

This wrong-headed approach was thoroughly exposed in 1955 in the late Rudolf Flesch’s landmark book *Why Johnny Can’t Read* and his sequel 30 years later called *Why Johnny Still Can’t Read*. The research studies that prove the necessity of phonics were compiled in *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* by the late Harvard Professor Jeanne S. Chall in her 1967 book, still considered the definitive analysis of reading research.

In 1996 forty of the nation’s top experts on language and reading from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other Massachusetts universities signed a joint letter blasting Whole Language and blaming it for our “serious decline in reading achievement.” The letter argued that a mastery of phonics “is fundamental to reading.” Explaining further, these experts wrote: “Written language is a way of noting speech. To become a skilled reader, a learner must master this notation system, learning how the sounds and oral gestures of language correspond to letters and letter groups.”

Further corroboration came in 1996 with the publication of *Teaching Our Children to Read* by Bill Honig, former California State Superintendent of Public Instruction. He refuted the Whole Language myth that the child will learn “naturally” in the same way that a child learns to talk, without explicit instruction in skills. Honig said that this false belief has had the “disastrous” result that 30 to 40% of urban children can’t read at all and more than 50% can’t read at their grade level.

Some encouraging straws in the wind have appeared. The Alabama State Board of Education has inaugurated an Alabama Reading Initiative emphasizing the development of phonemic awareness (that’s jargon for teaching the individual sounds in words) and the systematic teaching skills needed to decode words (that’s jargon for putting the sounds together to read words). The Alabama plan includes teacher training, demonstration sites, and a determination to use early intervention with children who need extra help. This year’s program involves 80 Alabama schools and the early results are encouraging the Board to include another 240 schools next year.

When are Americans going to deal with the scandal of illiteracy and the fraudulent way this scandal is addressed by leaders who should know better? Public school curriculum is **not** the business of the Federal Government. George W. Bush’s national education plan calls for increasing federal spending, spending \$1,000 per child to teach reading, and making sure that every child can read “by the end of the third grade.” The schools are cheating children if they are not taught to read by the end of the **first** grade, and it doesn’t cost \$1,000.